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Lincoln-Scapegoat Area

A Senate Interior Subcommittee hearing on the proposed "Lincoln - Scapegoat Wilderness," schedule for June 11 in Great Falls was postponed due to the death of Sen. Robert Kennedy. Roots of this wilderness proposal date way back to 1963 when the U.S. Forest Service first made public a long range development plan for this section of National Forest land straddling the Continental Divide in western Montana. The area was, and still remains, primitive in character principally because it has yet escaped development.

Included in the Forest Service's multiple use plan is development of certain trails and construction of roads through the mountains so that much of the back country could be seen, if not all reached, by automobile. Access trails, nature trails, campgrounds, and picnic areas would be developed also. Merchantable timber stands would be logged.

People of the Lincoln area and others who knew this outstanding remnant of back country were quick to react to the development proposal. Their main concern has been that the rather fragile nature of this area cannot sustain heavy, mass type recreation characteristic of regions easily accessible by road. It is most ideal for hiking and horseback travel and associated high quality type of recreation, therefore trail access only is essential.

This is one of the last ideal

Blackfoot-Sun River Divide area showing proposed Lincoln-Scapegoat Wilderness.

haunts of the west slope cutthroat trout. The cutthroat trout is the only native trout in western Montana. Introduced rainbow and brook trout have largely replaced the native species in all but back country areas of western Montana. Subspecies of the cutthroat trout have been placed on the endangered species list in several western states.

It appears that present fishing pressure, originating entirely from hikers and horse-back riders, is as heavy as the streams can bear. The lakes too, although highly attractive are shallow, small and not adapted to heavy fishing pressure. Heart Lake is the largest and deepest in the entire area. It includes 32 acres with a depth of about 50 feet in some spots. Grayling have successfully survived in Heart Lake along with cutthroat. The next two largest lakes are Parker and Webb. They are 12 and 18 acres respectively and although their maximum depths are over 10 feet, they are less than 6 feed deep over most of their areas. These two lakes are actually beaver ponds with mud bottoms but support a fair cutthroat fishery. Twin Lakes, seven and nine acres in size, also support some cutthroat. The

Scapegoat, the hub of a beautiful remote area. Waters trickling down from the snow banks on this great mountain mass find their way into three major drainages—the Sun River, Blackfoot, and Dearborn Drainages.

streams of the Lincoln back country are very likely important spawning and recruitment waters for the lower Blackfoot River system.

The fishery definitely could not withstand the heavy fishing which would accompany easy access. The only way fishing could be maintained would be on a put and take basis. This is not only expensive, but much of the quality of fishing is lost under these conditions. Inevitably, with heavy fishing pressure requiring put and take fishing, the native cutthroat would disappear.

The Lincoln back country has offered a "quality" type of hunting, especially for elk and grizzly bears. Mountain goats and upland game birds also add to attractiveness for hunters. This represents an extension of the grizzly bear range from the Bob Marshall Wilderness, and a goodly percentage of the grizzlies taken from Montana each year come from here. Since the big silvertip is characterisically an inhabitant of remote, wilderness type areas, the penetration of roads into the area with resultant heavy use would undoubtedly cause grizzlies to retreat from this part of their already limited range.

Much of the Lincoln-Scapegoat is alpine and subalpine in character, vegetation is sparse, and winters are long with heavy snows. There is excellent spring, summer and early fall range for elk, but winter range is somewhat limited. Average annual harvest of elk for the area is somewhat over 50 animals, and probably about all the herd would withstand on a sustained basis. Construction of roads into the area would not only change the quality of hunting, but would probably necessitate more restrictive seasons there.

Logging the area would probably stimulate the growth of brouse plants utilized as winter forage. It is felt, however, that due to the area lying in a generally heavy snow belt, the greater part of this forage supply would be unavailable to the elk herd during the winter months. They would very probably continue to winter a considerable distance to the east of the area along the Continental Divide, and unless a significant amount of winter range was obtained in that area, the herd itself could not be carried substantially in excess of the present numbers.

Meadow Lake, a beautiful overgrown beaver pond. This is one of the most enjoyable camping and fishing spots in the Lincoln Back-country.

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Edited by VERNON CRAIG

Elk contribute to the high quality type of hunting that has long been enjoyed in this undisturbed mountain country.

Opposition to the proposal that this country be opened up to mass recreation and to logging grew into major proportions and finally culminated in two bills that would set aside 240,500 acres as the Lincoln-Scapegoat area. These are S1121, introduced by Senators Metcalf and Mansfield and HR7148 by Congressman Battin. The fate of this beautiful unspoiled area will be determined after public hearings rescheduled for September.

Leaving camp at the base of the southern wall of Scapegoat.

Letter to the Editor . . .

Editor's Note: Montanans have repeatedly been told that their state is about to be discovered, and plans must be made to cope with this discovery. Here's an unsolicited letter from someone who HAS discovered Montana, and he likes it the way it is.

By Wiliam E. Keys
1707 West 30th, Austin, Texas

John Steinbeck's love affair with Montana so warmly worded in that writer's "Travels With Charley" a few years ago sets an enviable prose standard.

At the risk of unfavorable comparison I want to set down a few words of my own appreciation of the Treasure State which I think can be equated with Steinbeck's. His affection was all-encompassing from the rolling grasslands and forested mountains to the towns which impressed him as places to live in rather than "nervous hives."

My appreciation is broad too but I give emphasis to its trout fishing resources and potential resources, which certainly must be the best in the nation, and special emphasis to Montana people who make the angling there all the more memorable.

As a Texan (by adoption) I realize it's out of character to give the accolade to another state but honesty compels the admission that the biggest state (without a glacier) doesn't have everything.

As a flatlander hooked on the bass-beam-catfish mystique from boyhood I didn't discover trout fishing until middle age. That pleasant experience has since blossomed into addiction, thanks largely to Montana. Four visits there spaced through 15 years convince me that of the unchanging qualities of Montana and its people. I know other Texans agree—I meet so many of them on Montana streams.

Each stay in the Big Sky Country reinforces my opinion that Montana has spirit and character to match the bigness of the land.

Take my most recent visit in the summer of 1967. Loafing during a float trip lunch stop on the banks of the Madison River, I paid scant attention to two boats, moving abreast, which appeared upstream. As they approached I noted an absence of waving rods from either, although a man waded waist-deep beside one boat hand-guiding it while he rapidly retrieved something from beneath the water's surface and heaved it into the boat. Another man rowed a second craft and a third man paralleled the shore line, picking objects from the ground and tossing them into the boat.

As they passed our party with

a friendly greeting but no pause in their activity I began to understand what was going on, even as my companion, Jack Scully of Ennis, explained the men were his fellow guides gathering rusted cans, discarded cartons, shattered bottles and other ugly and dangerous debris.

Jack explained the guides had voluntarily initiated the clean-up along the sections of the river which they regularly floated with fishing clients. On off days various guides rotated on this type of duty which of course none of them had to perform. They just wanted to keep the river environment as clean as nature intended it to be. I suppose this could have happened anywhere but I had never seen it before nor have I seen it since in hundreds of spots in forest and along streams where man and wildlife would have reaped d i v i d e n d s from such thoughtfulness.

It seems to me this incident illustrates a facet of character among Montanans whom Steinbeck described as people who had the time to practice the art of neighborliness.

I've never failed in Montana to experience this outgoing spirit, whether the benefactor was the neighborly old gentleman across the street from my motel who plied my wife with fresh vegetables from his garden; the room maid who in another year overheard my wife express a desire for garden produce and daily thereafter left a big sack from her own garden in our kitchen — bristling at the suggestion we pay for them; or the grocer who had no insect spray in stock on his shelves but loaned his personal can of spray to use for use in our cabin.

Things have been going that way since my first visit. The memory of good fishing is something to delight in when you're back home amid the bustle of working life but the overriding memory is that of people of Montana who are a cut above the run of Homo Sapiens so frequently encountered in the outdoors.

Let me illustrate again. Returning to the valley floor after a long and rough jeep ride in rapidly gathering darkness one of our party, a Houston resident, discovered he apparently had left a creel containing two reels and other gear on the bank of a remote high-country lake. Characteristically our host wanted to return immediately and search for the lost articles but the owner protested—he had to depart for home early next morning and he simply wrote off his loss as due to his own forgetfulness. Imagine his delight, weeks later, at receiving a parcel containing all of the lost equipment. A Montana resident hunting in the lake area had found the creel and mailed it to the owner, every item intact, whose name and address happened to be in the creel.

There's more I could relate along the same lines but I'll emulate Steinbeck in a small way and cut off here. The shortest chapter in his book which described experiences in many states was that given to Montana. The author explained the difficulty of being articulate when one is in love! I've got something of the same problem as a review of the above words will indicate. If I lack articulateness and you're wondering what all this says it's just an outlander's attempt to say, "Thank you Montana, for being Montana."

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